Family

Bobby was the only son of Frank Vallejos and common law wife Gertrude Young. Bobby had many aunts and uncles from his dad's maternal side of the family. The 1910 Colorado census for Trinidad shows the Vallejos family consisted of:

Vallejos,	Adolfo	30	Head	Pablita	28	Wife
Pedro		10	Son	Juanita	8	Dau
Juan		7	Son	Frank	5	Son
Reyescitas		2	Dau	Luis	3/12	Son

'Bobby' or Robert, over 80 years later, was asked to describe his dad -

"My dad was between 5'9" and 5'11" tall and 145 lbs. dark hair and no teeth. He had a scar on his cheek that ran (from the edge of his mouth) almost to the lobe of his ear. He said he got it from felling a tree…and he was mean…according to my aunts, uncles and grandma Pablita."

Aunt (tia) Reyes told Robert that her brother Frank had a mean streak that caused him to stab her in the face, with an icepick. Uncle Luis fared much worse.

"According to tio Diego, my dad almost killed Luis. The reason he (lived) was he managed to get away from (Frank, as he) damn near chopped his leg off…with a double (headed) ax. His right leg was about 2" shorter than his left. (Doctors) had to shorten the bone, (then) apparently put in a piece of steel or whatever they used in them days. He always walked…wearing a special shoe. He still had a horrible limp."

Uncles and aunts described Frank as needing to have all the attention.

"He could not bear anyone else being better than he could do, which was who could drink the most booze. That was his power."

"(Frank) had (only a) second grade education. He refused to go to school. His brothers would try to make him (go), but he'd beat the hell outta them. So they gave up… (they) didn't want (to get beat up) by a squirt."

Still, Frank was resourceful and realistic, considering his financial reserves, during the Depression years. Frank made do with what he was able to find from the dump.

"They basically, even when I was born…up to when I started school, they were living off the dump."

"My dad had took a Peerless car and he converted it. He took off all of the…only thing he left on was where the driver sits, the windshield and a little bit of the (cab). The rest he cut off (down to the chassis). He made a box with boards where he could haul ashes and coal. That damn car, I'm tellin ya, would climb straight up the damn hill! That used to scare me."

Frank's mother was Pablita Alderete Martinez. In the Spanish/Mexican manner of listing one's name you have the given name (Pablita), her father's name (Alderete) and then her mother's maiden name (Martinez). Very handy for genealogists, but a real confusing tradition for the European manner of naming. Official records such as church or census notes were filled out by folks often unaware of these rules, frequently dropping the middle name and leaving only the given and mother's name. If the individual supplying the information cannot read or write, these mistakes can confuse generations.

Frank's father Adolfo Vallejos Lopez married Pablita on 10 Nov 1902, in the Holy Trinity Church of Trinidad, CO. The baptism record for Frank on 6 June 1904, lists his name as Joannes Franciscus Lopez, with his parents as Adolphus Lopez and Paula Alderete. The confusion stemmed from Adolfo's parents being Teodoro Ballejos and Francesca Lopez. Not until January of 1947 was the church record corrected to read, Frank Vallejos.

Pablita's father was Estevan Alderete, and her mother was Marta Martinez. Pablita's side of the family provided the lion's share of aunts, uncles and cousins that Bobby grew up with. Often interceding to ensure Bobby did grow up!

"When I was little I fell into an old wine barrel filled with water that was set flush into the ground, so it was flat (with the surface). I fell in and I was wearing a little red jumpsuit one of my grandma's made. Everybody thought I was dead cause I wasn't breathin, I wasn't doin nothing. One of my aunts took a low branch where we used to hang bacon, threw a rope over it and hung me upside down, beatin the hell outta my back. All of a sudden a big splash of liquid came out and I took a deep breath. Started bawlin like a normal baby would. I was told later my aunt took after (my mom) Gertrude, rippin out a lot of her hair."

"My parents used to hang me on the clothesline for long periods. They'd prop these big, bootleg bottles that was about this tall (18") with goat's milk and one with water. Plus, they'd leave a loaf of bread for me to chew on. That's what I lived on while they were out partying, selling booze and drugs – havin a good time. That went on until Tio Diego found out about it. He beat the shit outta my dad like you wouldn't believe. But nothing could penetrate that screwball (my dad)."

"My grandma Pablita would whomp on her son (my dad) cuz he'd be such a pain in the ass; teasing me and making me cry. POW! One wack and he was down on the floor; knocked him out. Grandma was tough and if Gertrude even looked in her direction she'd pop her too – she didn't like either one of them."

"I was still a little kid when they would take me to the dancehall; a humongous…looked like a hanger for a B-29 bomber. They'd pile me up with all these security blankets in hopes I'd eventually go to sleep. But I couldn't go to sleep because…my godmother, and Aunts Nancy, Lucy, Josie, Eva, Rose uh…Porfilia, Helen…all wanted to dance with me. I was just a little kid. That would piss off my dad, cuz he was a hell of a dancer – or thought he was. But he couldn't do anything sober, he had to be drunk. Every damn thing he ever did in his life, he'd get drunk. My dad would play his guitar at the dance hall. He'd play maybe 3 or 4 songs, then all of a sudden…god, he' sounded like a beginner. Couldn't carry a tune cuz he'd be so damn drunk and potted out on marijuana."

"Once while at the dancehall, Josie Ramos, one of my aunts, beat the hell out of my mother Gertrude, for the simple fact…I needed to have my diaper changed! I'm full of shit! I'm bawling like a baby and my mom came over and slapped me. Josie finally got fed up with her…you could smell my shit all over the damn place. It was all over my back, the blanket was full of shit and everything else. They had fist to cuffs right there on the dance floor. Then Josie picked me up and made another diaper out of one of the other blankets – cuz the diaper I had on was the only one I had when they'd take me to the dancehall."

"I know all this because my dad's sister, tia Reyes, would go to these dances. After I came back from the service, I would hear all this stuff from when I was a young child."

Tio Diego Alderete, Pablita's brother, played a key role in Bobby's upbringing. One event early in Bobby's memory remained a flashpoint of anger against his father Frank. It involved a patch of curly white Angora goat hair. It was the catalyst to remind the 85-year-old man of himself as a boy… sitting atop a pony, wearing a big hat, Angora goat chaps and holding a gun.

"I was a cowboy! Whoo-ah! You could see my shoestrings hittin the ground…tio Diego bought me a Shetland pony and he made chaps out of Angora goat…he also gave me this little .32 special pistol. It was chrome plated and it had ivory handles on it. It was a little bitty thing and would use a cartridge for a bullet."

"Of course, he took the pin out so I wouldn't shoot myself. And I had this big 10-gallon hat on, it was bigger than I was. Snyder was the name of the photographer who took the picture…anyway, about a week later my horse disappeared, and my chaps – my dad had sold them. My dad took them, took them all."

Traveling photographers often use props such as a horse, chaps, hat and gun to increase sales…but try to explain that to a 3-year-old.

Not long after the Shetland pony/chaps trauma, tio Diego brought home two German Shepard puppies.

"He called them Chucho and Chucha, male and female dogs. They became big hummers, beautiful animals, gosh…I used to ride Chucho…he was my horsee! Giddy up horsee! I'd smack him with my open hand and he'd take off runnin; knocking me off a couple of times. He'd make a full 90 degree turn and wham! Down I'd go. I'd get madder than hell at him…I didn't know how to cuss in them days, until I started school. I didn't start school till I was 7."

When Bobby was more of a hindrance, and his fidgeting began to irritate his uncle, Bobby was allowed to go play.

"I'd take off with Chucho and Chucha and we'd go way the hell up where my grandma used to go. I'd go up there and I'd do what she used to do. She used to pray…and this beautiful, beautiful warm feeling would come all over me. My dogs would be there, one on each side, resting their heads on my legs. Chucho would let out a deep (contented) sigh."

Great uncles, from Pablita's mother Marta Martinez, also had a hand in Bobby's upbringing.

"Tio Andalesseo Martinez lived in Hoehne, CO. 13 miles East of Trinidad. It was a small farming/ranch community. Tio Henry Martinez lived in Maxwell, NM and worked for the railroad. Maxwell was where they used to load up water for the big ol steam engines. I used to listen for the train coming several miles away (by putting my ear on the rails) as it was heading to Santa Fe, NM. Tia Cukah lived near Timpas, CO. Grandpa used to drive a stagecoach from Lahana, CO. to Trinidad."

The traditional family structure was matrilineal. The women in Bobby's family were tough, and land ownership was often kept within their clan. Men who married into the family often came from far away and were expected to settle near the wife's family. Frank's father Adolfo Vallejo was born in New Mexico. After working jobs wherever they could be found, Adolfo ended up in Trinidad, CO where he met Pablita Alderete Martinez. The Martinez clan was firmly entrenched around the southern borders of Colorado and New Mexico; territory that overlapped ancient pueblos, Jicarilla Apache and Navajo.

Since the chaotic influx of the Spanish, French and Europeans beginning in the 1500's, the pure native bloodlines were diluted greatly - often by force. Present day technology that measures one's DNA foundations, would be hard pressed to find truly 100% pure native blood. Over time the Spanish became synonymous with Mexican.

Adolfo Vallejo built a log cabin for his new family; way up into Powder House Canyon; near the coal mine he worked for his dad.

"The mines were at the base of the hill where he had his cabin. The mines were within a small, sandstone cliff, maybe 50' in height. The mountain continued up, rounded off on top then rolled into another canyon known as Baldy Canyon. Adolfo's cabin was right on top." "My (Grandma) Kiwidi is buried up there somewhere, uh, a crevice burial. Beautiful place."

"Where we lived was way up in Powerhouse Canyon, but everybody called it Pinon Canyon. They'd like to go pickin pinon nuts up there when they were in season every 7 years. Powder House Canyon was its true name. Back then the settlers of that area would mine sulfur; which was used in making gunpowder. There was actually a building, you can still see the old foundations, where they had the powder house. All they needed was salt peter, sulfur and charcoal to make black powder. They used a lot in the coal mines that were there too."

"Both my dad and grandpa Adolfo had coal mines. My grandpa's coal was the best. It was known as 'nigger head coal'. It used to come out in clumps. It was hard and would burn slow. You could throw a chunk of that into a potbellied stove and id burn all night and keep the room real warm. But the coal mine my dad had, had an awful lot of shale coal, which was only good for the power plant. He's put the best coal he had into the stove at home and id just die. What did burn would smell like sulfur all day long…very low grade."

"What my dad would do with his coal, he'd load up 2 big potato sacks with his coal. Tie a rope between them, around his shoulders and neck and take them to go sell. That was a lot of work. He'd get orders…and, uh, it was always from the poorest of the poor."

"My dad started his own crazy mine to show up his dad, Adolfo. I don't know how I survived workin in that mine. He drowned 4 jacks in that mine. He knew there was an overflow channel there, so whenever you'd get a heavy rain it was supposed to carry away water from the mine. This one cloudburst happened just before WWII (1938 or 39) and it overflowed the channel, filling the mine with water and that's what drowned them mules. That was the last of his mining days. He tried to blame me that I had locked them in…well hell, <u>he</u> always locked them in. I didn't have nothing to do with them mules; except tease them a little bit, once in a while."

"Tio Diego was living in Ludlow, CO. about 15-20 miles north of Trinidad around the time my dad lost those mules in the mine flood. After the mine closed I'd go help Tio Diego herd sheep. If it hadn't been for the Martinez and Alderete's, I'd of been a dead man! I'd of never survived my parents! They're the ones that saved my ass and taught me what I know."

All of Bobby's family were poor and depended a lot on what they could grow or catch.

"My aunts served squash and beans, every which way and form you could think of! Especially in winter, cuz we'd run out of meat. Then I'd go hunting with my uncles without using a rifle or anything like that. Just a piece of barbed wire, that's all you'd need. You'd catch all the damn rabbits you want. Wait until after a good snowstorm, when you see their tracks to their hole, where it's nice and cozy. Stick that wire in there and twist it. I'd wrapped around their fur, then you start pullin. I pulled as many as 3 rabbits at a wack outta a hole"

As Bobby matured, his uncles commenced instructing him in the proper methods of hunting.

"We couldn't go hunting by ourselves; that was a no-no. You had to go with an adult. They were to teach you how to hunt the <u>right</u> way. Not just to kill animals - that was taboo. Boy if they catch you killin an animal just for the hell of it…you got the shit beat out of you! Uncle Eloy, Andalesseo or Thomas would go with me to show me how to hunt. I showed them I was good with a slingshot. So good I killed a deer with one once…hit him right between the eyeballs. Killed him dead. Surprised even me. I was about 13. I ran all the way home, about 3 miles. I brought uncle Eloy back and he gutted him out for me and brought it home. I got a lot of praise…it was my first big kill. After that they started teaching me to use a .22 and other weaponry. Wonderful people. It was quite a life that made me what I am today."